

PRESS RELEASE

Lunenburg Fire Department

131 White St., 5/10/08

At 5:26 PM on Saturday May 10, 2008 the Lunenburg Fire Dept. was dispatched to a reported structure fire at the Pearl Brook Apartments, 131 White St. in Lunenburg. The fire was called in by a neighbor via 911 and at the same time notification was being made by a fire alarm system.

On arrival of fire fighters, heavy fire was issuing from a second floor apartment in Unit J. A male victim was outside on the ground and CPR was being administered by a Townsend fire fighter that happened to be driving by and saw the smoke and a Massachusetts State Trooper assigned to the State Fire Marshal's Office that lives in the neighborhood.

Deputy Chief David P. Demers was the incident commander and called for second and third alarms. Hose lines were stretched to the apartment that was on fire and the other 7 apartments in the building were searched. Fire units from Lunenburg included Engines 4, 1, 3, and 5, Ladder 1 and Rescue 2. A paramedic unit from Townsend responded to the scene to assist Lunenburg Rescue 2 with the fire victim.

A 53 year old male occupant from the apartment of fire origin apparently was able to exit the unit to an outside porch where he collapsed and was subsequently dragged down the stairs to the ground by another resident of the apartment that was outside gardening. Lunenburg and Townsend emergency medical personnel transported the male victim to Leominster Hospital where he was pronounced deceased. The name is not being released at this time pending notification of family members.

Engines from Fitchburg, Leominster and Townsend responded to the fire scene to assist Lunenburg units. Townsend and Shirley engines covered the Lunenburg Fire Station. An interior attack was made by the initial arriving Lunenburg fire fighters. Large hose lines were stretched from a hydrant within the complex and from White St.

A joint investigation was conducted by the Lunenburg Fire and Police Departments and the Fire Investigation Unit of the Massachusetts State Fire Marshal's Office. It has been determined that the most probable cause was the use of smoking materials while the victim was on oxygen for treatment of several pulmonary disorders.

The Pearl Brook Apartment complex is primarily housing for elderly residents. There are 5 buildings with 8 apartments each and a community center. The facility is managed under contract by the Leominster Housing Authority. Individual units are equipped with smoke alarms that sound in the apartment only and fire alarm system connected smoke detectors in the common hallways. There are no automatic sprinklers.

According to Deputy Chief Demers, who is also a fire protection engineer, "If the units had been provided with automatic sprinklers, it is highly likely that the fire would have been contained to a piece of furniture and the victim would have had a significant chance of survival."
